'THE RINGWOOD FIELD NATURALIST'
CLUB NEWSLETTER

ISSUE No. 41 OCTOBER 2015

EDITORIAL: This issue of the Newsletter demonstrates clearly the wide-ranging activities and interests that are catered for in our programme. The Club's website and Facebook pages also provide means for sharing knowledge. In addition, members have the opportunity to take part in events organised by other natural history organisations. Those who attended the SEANA weekend held at Donald in September found themselves out of their comfort zone in a place where water shortage is a constant challenge. In a changing environment the role of field naturalists in recording and disseminating information continues to expand in relevance and importance.

* *

Members doing some bird-watching on the margin of Lake Corangamite during the Colac Weekend, March 2015

CONTENTS

Editorial 1

President's Annual Report 2014-15 . . . 2

Field Trips 3

Members' Contributions and Reports . . 4,9

Field Care Day 9

Obituaries 10

Field Observations 11

Dates for your Diary 12

PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT 2014-15 by Jack Airey

The past twelve months have had some highs and lows for the Club. Starting off last September with the presentation of three Life Memberships to Cecily Falkingham and Alison and Peter Rogers, participation at meetings, events and camp-outs has been very strong, which is a terrific sign of the continued success of the Club. We have had a range of speakers and members have participated in giving presentations and sharing many personal photos at meetings.

However, it has been a challenging year for some members with injuries and physical ailments. Long standing member Ruth Christensen suffered a stroke in 2014 preventing her from attending meetings and excursions. Ruth joined the Club in 1993 and has spent many years on the Committee, as Treasurer and recently as Librarian. We wish Ruth well in her continued recovery.

On 22nd August Ron Smith passed away after suffering from complications from pneumonia while recovering from an operation. While Ron was a relatively new member to the Club, with his wife Shirley, he was a very enthusiastic field naturalist and conservationist. Always good for a chat and a laugh with his dry sense of humour, Ron will be sadly missed and the Club extends its condolences to Shirley.

We've had a varied program for both meetings and excursions. Two notable events were our "indoor" January outdoor meeting and breakfast with the birds at Badger Weir, which we run every couple of years. We also visited new areas including Pinkerton Forest, Eynesbury and the Blackburn Creeklands.

The members' nights as always have been very successful with wide-ranging topics. A sincere thanks to all members who volunteer for talks and running excursions. A very special thanks goes to Roger and Inta who ran both camp-outs this year.

Special thanks to the Committee for their support and hard work throughout the year making sure everything runs smoothly. Thanks to Alan as Vice President, Peter as Immediate Past President, Ray as Treasurer and membership manager, Eleanor as Secretary, Alison as program manager, Bob as Librarian, David for managing the projector at meetings and Hazel and Roger. Thanks to Judith as our Newsletter editor and Loris for providing our financial auditing.

It's been a great honour and privilege to stand as President for the Club. I've enjoyed my term immensely, growing both as a field naturalist and also as a person. Many thanks to all our members and supporters of the Club.

Autumn Campout at Colac - 20th-22nd March 2015

Leaders: Roger and Inta Needham

Members gathered beside Lake Colac adjacent to the Colac Botanic Gardens on Friday afternoon. Waders identified included Curlew Sandpipers, Red-necked Stints, Pelicans, Swans, Red-necked Avocets, Shelducks, Pink-eared Ducks and Pacific Black Ducks. At Rifle Butts Rd, a Yellow-billed Spoonbill was added to the birdlist. At the conclusion of the day members shared dinner together on the shores of Lake Colac.

On Saturday we travelled to Red Rock near Alvie. We visited both lookouts and viewed many volcanic features such as maars, scoria cones and lava flows. During a special morning tea at the picnic area to celebrate President Jack's birthday, two Collared Sparrowhawks were spiralling overhead. At Lake Corangamite the dry lake-bed was well exposed. Only one Double-banded Plover was seen as well as 2 or 3 Red-capped Plovers. Piles of tiny *Coxiella* shells littered the lake floor. Our lunch stop was the historic small town of Beeac, where members were impressed by the outdoor windmill museum. Lunch was eaten overlooking the dry salt-encrusted bed of Lake Beeac. Next stop was the disused basalt quarry on Ondit-Warrion Road where the flooded floor attracted a variety of waterbirds including Blue-billed and Musk Ducks, Shovelers, Hardheads, Cormorants, Grebes and Spoonbills. The day concluded at Meredith Park on the northern shores of Lake Colac. Sightings here included Nankeen Kestrels, 18 White-faced Herons, a number of Red-necked Stints and what we thought might be the endangered Corangamite Skink. Dinner had been organised in the private dining-room at Colac RSL courtesy of the manager, Ray Wall's friend Ian Morgan. This was followed by a tour of the building, once the Colac Theatre.

On Sunday, members met at Triplet Falls carpark in the Otways. Most of the group attempted the 400 steps of the falls walk through Mountain Ash and Antarctic Beech forest, while others did an alternate walk along Phillips and Young's Creek track. Bassian Thrush, Crimson Rosellas and Scrubwrens were seen. A mysterious epiphytic fern and some impressive Lawyer's Wig fungi were also photographed. Lunch, the traditional group photograph and a Rose Robin concluded the visit. At Gellibrand on return to Colac we walked along a roadside plantation adding King Parrot, Striated Thornbill and Eastern Spinebill to our birdlist. Members remaining travelled to Love's Creek Picnic area where a ramble through the bush gained us some more plant sightings but few birds apart from White-throated Needletails. This was the official close of the weekend and members dispersed.

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS - WEEPING SPLEENWORT

The unusual epiphytic fern observed high on two tall tree trunks at Triplet Falls during the Colac weekend was later identified as *Asplenium flaccidum* (Weeping Spleenwort). It is known from very few local sites and its conservation status is significant. The Otways is the westernmost extent of its range in Victoria. The sighting, with photographs, has been submitted to the Citizen Science section of the Atlas of Living Australia. Judith Cooke

sightings.ala.org.au

FIELD TRIPS

Pinkerton Forest and Eynesbury - 12th April 2015

Leaders: Roger and Inta Needham

Members were met on Mt Cotterell Rd at the gate to the Melton Waste Water Treatment Plant by a member of the Pinkerton Landcare & Environment Group (PLEG) and entered the Pinkerton Forest, where PLEG members displayed local photos and artifacts and outlined the work of their organisation. A descendent of the pioneering settlers, Brian Campbell, described the human and environmental history of the area. The forest comprised predominantly Grey Box woodland with an understorey of herbs and native grasses. Significant plants were Blue Box, *Eucalyptus baueriana ssp thalassima* and Turkey Bush, *Eremophila deserti*. Several waterbirds utilised waterbodies associated with the treatment plant. Diamond Firetail, Zebra Finch and Red-rumped parrots were observations not common in Ringwood. After lunch we drove to nearby Eynesbury and walked around the ornamental lake observing Freckled Ducks and other waterbirds. A walk through more Grey Box forest with a richer understorey offered more birdlife. One of the most common birds was the Brown Treecreeper, a species never seen in Ringwood.

Upper Yarra Reservoir Park - 16th May 2015 Leader: Jack Airey

25 members and 3 guests travelled to the Upper Yarra Reservoir Park near Reefton. This is the closest the public can get to the source of the Yarra River. It is also a well-known spot for fungi. Following a week with 6cms of rain, hopes were high for a good showing of fungi. It was a beautiful sunny day as we met near the ranger station, a Collared Sparrowhawk soaring overhead. We did both of the nature walks from the main carpark, with lunch in between. Incredibly we found an estimated 60-70 species of fungi - certainly enough to keep members hopping over logs and scrambling around in the dirt for most of the day! Highlights were *Dermocybe austroveneta* with their dark green caps, the stunning purple *Cortinarius archeri* and the ever-popular *Mycena interrupta*. Birds weren't as common as mushrooms but everyone agreed that it was a wonderful day for a walk in the bush. Special thanks to Judith Cooke and Cecily Falkingham for sharing their fungi identification knowledge.

Badger Weir - 14th June 2015 Leaders: Alison and Peter Rogers

As arranged with Parks Victoria, the gates at Badger Weir slid open at 7.00am, giving access to the few brave members who arrived in the dark, with the moon still up, for Breakfast with the Birds.
As it started to get light the birds began to call. While our bacon and eggs were cooking a family of kookaburras, some pied currawongs and a grey shrike-thrush visited, while Lyrebirds were calling in the fern gullies. 21 members and one visitor commenced the walk to the weir as a male lyrebird went through his repertoire beside the track. Some lucky members caught a glimpse of this amazing bird.
Although there were few birds and fungi were scarce, it was, as usual, a wonderful walk. Due to recent rains, tree ferns, ground ferns and epiphytic ferns were all looking lush and green. On our return via the Slip Track fungi were more prevalent and the Giant Moss (*Dawsonia* sp) is always worth stopping for.

Field Trip to Blackburn Creeklands - 11th July 2015

Organisers - Roger and Inta Needham

Despite an ominous forecast, 15 members and 5 visitors assembled in Pakenham St. Blackburn with the weather cool but fine. After a short presentation for a member's birthday, Megan Short of the Blackburn Creeklands Advisory Committee introduced us to the history of the area and described how it is being managed. We explored Blacks Walk Reserve then followed the course of the creek east on the northern bank to Blackburn Road, returning along the southern bank. Calls of Noisy Miners, Rainbow Lorikeets and Pied Currawongs were heard and Gang Gang Cockatoos and Tawny Frogmouths were notable among the 20 species seen on the walk. Indigenous plants recorded were Manna Gum, Swamp Gum, Yellow Box, Silver and Black Wattles, Blackwood, Tree Violet, Victorian Christmas Bush, Prickly Currant Bush, *Correa reflexa* (green-flowered form) and *Goodenia ovata*. Fungi included Slippery Jack, Coprinus sp., earth stars, bracket fungi and slime moulds. President Jack thanked Megan for leading the day and working over the past 30 years to retain and restore this lovely natural reserve.

Olinda Falls and Karwarra Australian Plant Garden - 16th August 2015

Leaders: David and Eeva Hewitt

On a cool but fine day seventeen intrepid souls set out for a walk to Olinda Falls. Most of us made it to the lower falls and then the easier walk to the upper falls followed by a muddy loop track back to the car park. Very few plants were in flower and we only sighted a couple of orchids in bud, but several interesting fungi were sighted and a few birds including a female lyrebird digging not far from the track. After about 2 hours we moved to Karwarra Gardens for lunch. The sun came out, we were joined by six more members and given a fascinating guided tour of the gardens led by Lindy after she had given us a given a brief history of the gardens. Many unusual plants were in flower, some orchids were starting to appear, and we saw a number of small birds.

F J C Rogers Reserve/H E Parker Reserve/Dexter's Bushland, Heathmont - 5th September 2015 Leader: Judith Cooke

Seventeen members and one visitor gathered in Campbell Street to learn there was a minor impediment to progress as an adult Tawny Frogmouth was on the ground in the middle of the reserve. We approached it carefully, while it provided some excellent photograph opportunities, before it was encouraged to take off and perch in a tree. Its mate was later observed nearby. We then explored the reserve thoroughly, delighted at the diversity and density of the ground cover and the prolific display of native wildflowers, both indigenous and introduced native species. We then enjoyed lunch together in the beautiful surroundings. Afterwards, those who could stay moved on to the H E Parker Reserve, where we enjoyed a ramble through Dexter's Bushland and along the Dandenong Creek. The light drizzle falling early in the day gradually cleared to allow a few brief patches of sunshine.

R J Chambers Flora and Fauna Reserve - 19th September 2015
Leaders: Graeme and Helen Fernandes, Cathie Wall

25 members and 8 visitors, including 7 members from the Peninsula F.N.C., met at the entrance to the Reserve. After Graeme gave a brief introduction, we set off along the Hakea Circle track where the first orchid species was spotted, (*Chiloglottis valida*). We followed the descending Acacia Walk to the junction of the Lyrebird Walk, observing noticeable changes in the vegetation. The scattered rocky outcrops provided habitat for plant communities including the Yellow Rice-flower with an understorey of Bushy Needlewood and Furze Hakea providing good cover. At the junction of the Tomuc and Swampy Creeks, very tall Mountain Grey Gums together with examples of the sedge community grew on the banks, including the Common Tall sedge and Fishbone Water-fern. Climbing the Wombat Track we passed Messmate then Narrow-leaved Peppermint higher up. We returned to the cars for a well-earned lunch. A short walk along the Kangaroo Trail in the afternoon revealed several Tall Greenhoods around 65 cm high. Many pairs of eyes contributed.

MID-WEEK FIELD TRIPS

Inaugural Weekday Outing - Wilson Botanic Gardens, Berwick - 24th June 2015 Leaders: Roger and Inta Needham

Twelve members celebrated this landmark event with a cuppa in the carpark of this converted stone quarry. The park contains a mixture of Australian and exotic plants. Established gardens have been created near the entrance but the northern area is yet to be landscaped and contains many weed species. After completing the lake circuit walk, we went to the lookout for good views over Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs. 27 bird species were seen and notable plants were Wollemi and Bunya Pines and Hakea Burrendong Beauty in flower Lunch in the Rose Garden beside the Visitor Information Centre ended the official outing though 10 members drove to Cardinia Reservoir and enjoyed the remainder of the afternoon there.

Devilbend Reservoir - 21st July 2015 Leader: Roger Needham

Members were delighted with the newly developed walking tracks along the water's edge and soon accumulated an interesting list of water and bush birds, including Grey Shrike-Thrush, Musk Duck, Coots, Black Swans, Little Pied Cormorants, and Yellow-billed Spoonbill. Pink and white *Epacris impressa* was in flower and several species of fungi were found, particularly *Lichenomphalia chromacea*. We followed an extended circuit track admiring views in several directions before lunch. We drove to Woods Bushland Reserve where another walk produced *Pterostylis nutans* and added to the bird and fungi species. The day concluded with afternoon tea.

Jells Park and Shepherds Bush - 25th August 2015

Leaders: Don and Sandra Redman

A walk around Jells Lake by 12 members was rewarded with highlights of five Freckled duck, Pink-eared duck and the return of Fan-tailed cuckoo. The afternoon walk was to Shepherds Bush along the Dandenong creek. Magnificent examples of *Eucalyptus viminalis* line the creek as do *Acacia dealbata,* which were in flower. Additional birds here took the day's tally to 51.

FIELD CARE DAY

The Osborne Peninsula Land Care Group – 26th July 2015

Members Sandra and Don Redman, Inta and Roger Needham, Eleanor and Warwick Dilley and Alison and Peter Rogers met a similar amount of Osborne members at the nursery and walked along the river track to the selected site across the river from Jumping Creek Reserve. Although a cold morning, following a demonstration on planting and placing plant guards we soon warmed up and had helped plant 1000 native grasses and small shrubs indigenous to the area along the river edge in no time - including Acacias, Prostantheras, Goodenias, Correas and Poa grasses. Our bird list included wood duck, black duck, white-faced herons, a darter, eastern rosellas, galahs, sulphur-crested cockatoos, grey shrike-thrush and more. This very enthusiastic local group was extremely grateful for the time and effort put in by our Club. A well-earned cup of tea/coffee was provided with yummy homemade scones and cakes to eat, whilst we chatted. Alison Rogers

REPORTS FROM MEMBERS - CROSSBACK STINGAREE

Recently whilst walking on the Ventnor beach at Phillip Island I found a dead Crossback Stingaree (*Urolophus cruciatus*). It had been washed up in the shallows and was quite badly damaged. I had seen stingrays before but not this species. They are endemic to South-eastern Australia and can be found in coastal waters off Victoria and Tasmania. The specimen I found was 50cm long and fully-grown. These animals are nocturnal, lying motionless on the sea floor, partially buried during the day. They feed on Isopods, Polychaete worms, Amphipods and Shrimps.

The Stingaree can inflict a painful sting that may require surgery if the serrated tip of the sting breaks off inside the injured. I discovered this fact as I lifted it out of the water onto the sand to photograph it. Although it was dead I felt a sharp sting on my fingers.

My chances of seeing this interesting nocturnal animal hunting and moving gracefully along the ocean floor is nil but what I love doing is walking the beaches after a storm and doing some beach combing. And in doing so it is often possible to turn up something fascinating and maybe something I have never seen before. Cecily Falkingham

OBITUARIES

John (Jack) Truscott

The Club has lost another Foundation Member with the passing of Jack Truscott. Jack was a local artist who designed our Club emblem depicting a male Golden Whistler and *Acacia leprosa* (Cinnamon Wattle). He also designed the original car stickers displaying the Club name on a yellow background. The Club emblem was introduced to members in the form of a badge in 1964 and is still in use today. The badge has been used on teaspoons and from 2003 was applied to mugs and apparel. Jack, who was in his 90th year, died on 30th July shortly after suffering a serious fall. Our thoughts are with his family and friends.

Ron Smith

Members were saddened by the unexpected news that Ron had passed away in August. After recent surgery he was showing improvement so his sudden death following complications came as a shock to everyone. Although a "newer" member of the Club he had made many friends and his dry wit and sense of humour were greatly appreciated. Several members attended the funeral service and expressions of sympathy have been sent to Ron's wife, Shirley, and family.

Edward Richard 'Dick' Southcombe OAM
27.10.1928 - 14.09.2015

Described as a visionary and an inspiration, Dick was a highly-respected and admired leader of the GFNC for many years, being president for five years and awarded a Life Membership in 2007. His drive and enthusiasm were behind many of the achievements of the GFNC, including a number of memorable SEANA campouts. He was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 2004 for service to conservation and the environment. Messages of condolence have been forwarded to his wife, Shirley and family. Club member Judith Cooke attended the funeral.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

Olinda Falls and Karwarra Gardens 16-8-2015

Bird List

White-browed Scrubwren	Pied Currawong
Superb Fairy-wren	Kookaburra
Yellow-winged Honeyeater	Red Wattlebird
Magpie	Eastern Yellow Robin
Sulphur-crested Cockatoo	Brown Thornbill
Crimson Rosella	Eastern Spinebill
Eastern Rosella	Superb Lyrebird
King Parrot	Eastern Whipbird
Long-billed Corella	17 species

F J C Rogers Reserve/H E Parker Reserve/Dexter's Bush 5-9-2015

Bird List

Species [20]	**FJC**	**HEP**	**DB**
Crimson Rosella	✓		
Rainbow Lorikeet	✓	✓	✓
Musk Lorikeet	✓		
Tawny Frogmouth	✓		
Red Wattlebird	✓		✓
Noisy Miner	✓	✓	
Australian Magpie	✓	✓	✓
Grey Butcherbird	✓		✓
Little Raven	✓		
Magpie Lark	✓		
Galah		✓	
Common Bronzewing		✓	
Spotted Pardalote		✓	
Pied Currawong		✓	
Australian Wood Duck			✓
Australian White Ibis			✓
Straw-necked Ibis			✓
Masked Lapwing			✓
Brown Thornbill			✓
Welcome Swallow			✓

FIELD OBSERVATIONS (CONT)

R J Chambers Flora & Fauna Reserve 19-9-2015

Orchid List

Spotted Sun Orchid *Thelymitra ixioides*	Bearded Orchid *Calochilus robertsonii*	Small Mosquito Orchid *Acianthus pusillus*
Hare Orchid *Leptoceras menzieii*	Maroonhood *Pterostylis pedunculata*	Nodding Greenhood *Pterostylis nutans*
Bird Orchid *Chiloglottis valida*	Tall Greenhood *Pterostylis melagramma*	Small Tongue Orchid *Cryptostylis leptochila*

Bird List

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, Fan-tailed Cuckoo, Grey Currawong, Pied Currawong, Superb Fairy-wren, Grey Fantail, White-eared Honeyeater, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, White-naped Honeyeater, Laughing Kookaburra, Magpie, Spotted Pardalote, Little Raven, Eastern Yellow Robin, Scarlet Robin, Rose Robin, Eastern Rosella, Crimson Rosella, Grey Shrike-thrush, Eastern Spinebill, Brown Thornbill, Striated Thornbill, White-throated Treecreeper, Rufous Whistler, Grey Butcherbird, Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike, Red Wattlebird, Eastern Whipbird, Golden Whistler, Crested Shrike-tit, Welcome Swallow, Mistletoe Bird (highlight of the day) [32]

Dates for your Diary

8-11 April 2016 - SEANA Weekend - Geelong FNC

Friends of F J C Rogers Reserve, Heathmont, hold a working bee 12:00-2:00 pm on the 1st Wednesday of the month, Feb-Dec. Fred Rogers was a Foundation and Life Member of the Club and the Reserve contains an important diversity of local flora. Members welcome.

Free Environment Seminars are held by Manningham Council on the **first Wednesday of the month (Feb – Dec) at 7:30pm.** All are welcome. No booking is required.

Ringwood Field Naturalists Club Inc. Reg.No. A 9601 ABN 29099297169
Website http://www.rfnc.org.au

Copyright © October 2015. Editor, Judith V Cooke